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Globalizations

Boaventura de Sousa Santos

Abstract What is generally called globalization is a vast social field in which hegemonic or dominant social groups, states, interests and ideologies collide with counter-hegemonic or subordinate social groups, states, interests and ideologies on a world scale. Even the hegemonic camp is fraught with conflicts, but over and above them, there is a basic consensus among its most influential members (in political terms, the G-7). It is this consensus that confers on globalization its dominant characteristics. The counter-hegemonic or subordinate production of globalization is what is called insurgent cosmopolitanism. It consists of the transnationally organized resistance against the unequal exchanges produced or intensified by globalized localisms and localized globalisms.

Keywords counter-hegemony, emancipation, globalization, social movements, utopia, World Social Forum

Introduction

In the past three decades transnational interactions have intensified dramatically, from the production systems and financial transfers to the worldwide dissemination of information and images through the media, or the mass movements of people, whether as tourists or migrant workers or refugees. The extraordinary range and depth of these transnational interactions have led social scientists and politicians to view them as a rupture with previous forms of cross-border interactions, a new phenomena termed 'globalization'. The term 'global' today is used to refer both to the processes and to the results of globalization.

Whether new or old, the processes of globalization are a multifaceted phenomenon with economic, social, political, cultural, religious and legal dimensions, all interlinked in a complex fashion. Strangely enough, globalization seems to combine universality and the elimination of national borders, on the one hand, with rising particularity, local diversity, ethnic identity and a return to communitarian values, on the other. In other words, globalization appears to be the other side of localization, and vice versa. Moreover, it seems to be related to a vast array of transformations across the globe, such as the dramatic rise in inequality between rich and poor countries and between the rich and the poor in each country, environmental disasters, ethnic conflicts, international mass migration, the emergence of new states and the collapse or decline of others, the proliferation of civil wars, ethnic cleansing, globally organized crime, formal democracy as a political condition for international aid, terrorism, and militarism, etc.

The debates on globalization have centered around the following questions: (1) is globalization a new or an old phenomenon?; (2) is globalization monolithic or does it have different political meanings and both positive and negative aspects?; (3) is it as important in the social, political and cultural domains as it is in the economic domain?; and (4) assuming that globalization is intensifying, where is it leading, what is the future of national societies, economies, politics and cultures? These debates have been showing that what is generally called globalization is a vast social field in which hegemonic or dominant social groups, states, interests and ideologies collide with counter-hegemonic or subordinate social groups, states, interests and ideologies on a world scale (Fisher and Ponniah, 2003; Sen et al., 2004). Even the hegemonic camp is fraught with conflicts, but over and above them there is a basic consensus among its most influential members (in political terms, the G-7). It is this consensus that confers on globalization its dominant characteristics. Just as with the concepts that preceded it, such as

modernization and development, the concept of globalization contains both a descriptive and a prescriptive component. The prescription is, in fact, a vast set of prescriptions, all anchored in the hegemonic consensus. This consensus is known as the 'neoliberal consensus' or the 'Washington consensus', since it was in Washington in the mid-1980s that the core capitalist states in the world system subscribed to it, and it covers a vast set of domains (world economy, social policies, state–civil society relations, international relations). This consensus has weakened in recent years by virtue of both the rising conflicts within the hegemonic camp and resistance from social movements and progressive NGOs around the world (Fisher and Ponniah, 2003). However, it is this agreement that has brought us to where we are today and for that reason deserves to be analysed. The Washington consensus encompasses four major issues: (1) the consensus of the liberal (or rather, neoliberal) economy; (2) the consensus of the weak state; (3) the consensus of liberal democracy; and (4) the consensus of the primacy of the rule of law and the judicial system.

The consensus of the neoliberal economy states that national economies must open themselves up to the world market, and domestic prices must be accommodated to international prices; priority must be given to the export sector; monetary and fiscal policies must be guided towards a reduction in inflation; the rights of private property must be effectively and internationally protected; the entrepreneurial sector of the state must be privatized; there must be free mobility of resources (except labor), investments and profits; state regulation of the economy must be minimal; social policies must be a low priority in the state budget, no longer universally applied but rather implemented as compensatory measures for means-tested, vulnerable social strata.

The consensus of the weak state is based on the idea that the state, rather than being the mirror of civil society, is its opposite and potentially its enemy. The state inherently oppresses and limits civil society, and only by reducing its size is it possible to reduce its harmful effects and thus strengthen civil society. Hence, the weak state tends also to be a minimal state.

According to the consensus of liberal democracy, civic and political rights have an absolute priority over social and economic rights. Free elections and free markets are two sides of the same coin: the common good achieved through the actions of utilitarian individuals involved in competitive exchanges with the minimum of state interference.

Finally, the consensus of the primacy of the rule of law and the judicial system establishes the need for a new legal framework suited to the regulatory needs of the new economic and social model based on privatization, liberalization, and market relations. Property rights and contractual obligations must be guaranteed by the law and the judicial system, conceived of as independent and universal mechanisms that create standard expectations for businesses and consumers and resolve litigation through legal frameworks which are presumed to be accepted by everyone.

The different consensuses share a core idea that constitutes a kind of meta-consensus. This central idea is that we are entering a period in which deep political rifts are disappearing. The imperialist rivalries between the hegemonic countries, which in the 20th century had provoked two world wars, have disappeared, giving rise to interdependence between the great powers, cooperation and regional integration. Nowadays only small wars exist, many of which are of low intensity and almost always on the periphery of the world system. In any case, the core countries, through various mechanisms (selective military intervention, manipulation of international aid, control of multilateral agencies, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund), have the means to keep these focuses for instability under control (Patomäki and Teivainen, 2005). Moreover, conflicts between capital and labor are being relatively de-institutionalized without causing any instability, since labor has, in the meantime, become a global resource and no institutionalized global labor market still exists or ever will exist. The idea that rifts between the different models of social transformation are disappearing also forms part of this meta-consensus. The first three-quarters of the 20th century were dominated by rivalries between two antagonistic models: revolution and reformism. If, on the one hand, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall meant the end of the

revolutionary paradigm, the crisis of the welfare state in the developed countries and of the developmentalist state in the developing countries means that the reformist paradigm is equally condemned. In the face of this, social transformation is, from now on, no longer a political question but a technical question. The idea of the end of history is the extreme manifestation of this meta-consensus.

Moving from the descriptive/prescriptive level to the analytical level, it becomes evident that the dominant characteristics of globalization are the characteristics of the dominant or hegemonic globalization. Therefore, a crucial distinction must be made between hegemonic globalization and counter-hegemonic globalization.

The Nature of Globalizations

The idea of globalization, as a linear, homogenizing and irreversible phenomenon, although false, is prevalent nowadays, and tends to be all the more so as we move from scientific discourse into political discourse and everyday talk. Apparently transparent and without complexity, the idea of globalization masks more than it reveals of what is happening in the world. And what it masks or hides is, when viewed from a different perspective, so important that the transparency and simplicity of the idea of globalization, far from being innocent, must be considered an ideological and political move. Two motives for such a move should be stressed. The first is what we could call the determinist fallacy. It consists of inculcating the idea that globalization is a spontaneous, automatic, unavoidable and irreversible process which intensifies and advances according to an inner logic and dynamism strong enough to impose themselves on any external interferences. The fallacy consists in transforming the causes of globalization into its effects, obscuring the fact that globalization results from a set of political decisions which are identifiable in time and space, as mentioned above. The second political motive is the fallacy of the disappearance of the South. Whether at a financial level, or at the level of production or even of consumption, the world has become integrated into a global economy in which, faced with multiple interdependencies, it no longer makes sense to distinguish between North and South or between the core, periphery and semi-periphery of the world system. In the terms of this fallacy, even the idea of the 'Third World' is becoming obsolete. Since, contrary to this discourse, the inequalities between the North and the South have dramatically increased in the past three decades, this fallacy seems to have no other objective than to trivialize the negative, exclusionary consequences of neoliberal globalization by denying them analytical centrality. Thus, the 'end of the South', and the 'disappearance of the Third World' are, above all, a product of ideological changes which must, themselves, become an object of scrutiny (Santos, 2005; Sen et al., 2004).

Both the determinist fallacy and the fallacy of the disappearance of the South have lost credibility in recent years. On the one hand, if, for some, globalization is still considered a great triumph of rationality, innovation and liberty, capable of producing infinite progress and unlimited abundance, for others, it is increasingly an anathema, as it brings misery, loss of food sovereignty, social exclusion for ever vaster populations of the world, and ecological destruction, etc. On the other, a contradiction has been growing between those who see in globalization the finally indisputable and unconquerable energy of capitalism and those who discover in some of its features, such as the revolution in information and communication technologies, new opportunities to broaden the scale and the nature of transnational solidarity and anti-capitalist struggle (Buey, 2005).

In the light of these disjunctions and confrontations, it becomes clear that what we term globalization is, in fact, a set of different processes of globalization and, in the last instance, of different and sometimes contradictory globalizations. What we generally call globalization is, in fact, different sets of social relationships which give rise to different phenomena of globalization. In these terms there is not, strictly speaking, one sole entity called globalization, instead there are globalizations; to be precise, this term should only be used in the plural. As they are sets of social relationships, globalizations involve conflicts and, therefore, winners and losers. The dominant discourse on globalization is the history of the winners, told by the winners.

At an abstract level, only a process-based definition of globalization is possible. Here is my definition: it is a set of unequal exchanges in which a certain artefact, condition, entity or local identity extends its influence beyond its local or national borders and, in so doing, develops an ability to designate as local another rival artefact, condition, entity or identity.

The most important implications of this concept are as follows. First, there is no originally global condition; what we call globalization is always the successful globalization of a particular localism. In other words, there are no global conditions for which we cannot find local roots. The second implication is that globalization presupposes localization. The process that creates the global as the dominant position in unequal exchanges is the same one that produces the local as the dominated, and therefore hierarchically inferior, position. In fact, we live as much in a world of globalizations as we live in a world of localizations. Therefore, in analytical terms, it would be equally correct if our current situation and our research topics were defined in terms of localization instead of globalization. The reason why the latter term is preferred is basically because hegemonic scientific discourse tends to favor the history of the world as told by the winners.

There are many examples of how globalization produces localization. The English language as a *lingua franca* is one. Its propagation as a global language implies the localization of other languages, even of languages which not long ago saw themselves as potentially global languages, as is the case of the French language. Analogously, the French or Italian actors of the 1960s – from Brigitte Bardot to Alain Delon, or from Marcello Mastroianni to Sophia Loren – who at the time symbolized the universal style of acting, seem, when we watch their films again nowadays, provincially European, if not curiously ethnic. The difference in view lies in the way in which, since then, the Hollywood style of acting has managed to globalize itself. That is to say, once a certain process of globalization has been identified, its integral meaning and explanation cannot be obtained without taking into account the adjacent processes of relocation occurring simultaneously or in sequence to it.

One of the transformations most frequently associated with the processes of globalization is the compression of time and space, or, rather, the social process by which phenomena accelerate and are spread throughout the world. Although apparently monolithic, this process combines highly differentiated situations and conditions and, because of this, cannot be analysed independently of the power relations that respond to the different forms of temporal and spatial mobility. On the one hand, there is the global capitalist class, which in reality controls the space–time compression and is capable of transforming it in its favor. On the other, there are the classes and subordinate groups, such as migrant workers and refugees, who in recent decades have represented much cross-border traffic, but who do not, in any way, control the space–time compression. Between the executives of the multinational companies and the emigrants and refugees, tourists represent a third mode of production of the compression of space and time.

There are also those who contribute greatly to globalization but remain, nevertheless, prisoners in their own local time–space. By cultivating the coca, the peasants of Bolivia, Peru and Colombia, contribute decisively to the world drug culture, but remain ‘localized’ in their villages and mountains, as they always have been. So do the Rio slum-dwellers, who are prisoners of their marginal urban lifestyle, while their songs and dances, particularly the samba, are nowadays part of a globalized music culture. The production of globalization therefore entails the production of localization.

I distinguish two main modes of production of globalization. The first one consists of a twin process of globalized localisms/localized globalisms. Globalized localism is the process by which a particular phenomenon is successfully globalized, whether it is the worldwide activities of the multinational, the transformation of the English language into a *lingua franca*, the globalization of American fast food or popular music or the worldwide adoption of the same laws of intellectual ownership, patents or telecommunications aggressively promoted by the USA. In this mode of production of globalization, what is globalized is the winner of a struggle for the appropriation or valorization of resources or for the hegemonic recognition of a given

cultural, racial, sexual, ethnic, religious, or regional difference. This victory translates into the capacity to dictate the terms of integration, competition and inclusion.

The second process of globalization is the localized globalism. It consists of the specific impact on local conditions produced by transnational practices and imperatives that arise from globalized localisms. To respond to these transnational imperatives, local conditions are disintegrated, oppressed, excluded, destructured, and, eventually, restructured as subordinate inclusion. Such localized globalisms include: the elimination of traditional commerce and subsistence agriculture; the creation of free trade enclaves or zones; the deforestation and massive destruction of natural resources in order to pay off external debt; the use of historic treasures, religious ceremonies or places, craftsmanship and wildlife for the benefit of the global tourism industry; ecological dumping (the 'purchase' by Third World countries of toxic waste produced in the core capitalist countries in order to pay for foreign debt); the conversion of subsistence agriculture into agriculture for export as part of 'structural adjustment'; and the ethnicization of the workplace (devaluing of salaries because the workers belong to an ethnic group considered 'inferior').

These two processes operate in conjunction and constitute the hegemonic type of globalization, also called neoliberal, top-down globalization or globalization from above. The processes should be dealt with separately, since the factors, agents and conflicts which intervene in one or the other are partially distinct. The sustained production of globalized localisms and localized globalisms is increasingly determining or conditioning the different hierarchies that constitute the global capitalist world. The international division of the production of globalization tends to assume the following pattern: core countries specialize in globalized localisms, while peripheral countries only have the choice of localized globalisms.

Insurgent Cosmopolitanism

There is, however, a second mode of production of globalization. I call it insurgent cosmopolitanism. It consists of the transnationally organized resistance against the unequal exchanges produced or intensified by globalized localisms and localized globalisms. This resistance is organized through local/global linkages between social organizations and movements representing those classes and social groups victimized by hegemonic globalization and united in concrete struggles against exclusion, subordinate inclusion, destruction of livelihoods and ecological destruction, political oppression, or cultural suppression, etc. They take advantage of the possibilities of transnational interaction created by the world system in transition, including those resulting from the revolution in information technology and communications and from the reduction of travel costs. Insurgent cosmopolitan activities include, among many others: egalitarian transnational North–South and South–South networks of solidarity among social movements and progressive NGOs; the new working-class internationalism (dialogues between workers' organizations in different regional blocs); transnational coalitions among workers of the same multinational corporation operating in different countries; coalitions of workers and citizenship groups in the struggle against sweatshops, discriminatory labor practices and slave labor; international networks of alternative legal aid; transnational human rights organizations; worldwide networks of feminist, indigenous, ecological or alternative development movements and associations; and literary, artistic and scientific movements on the periphery of the world system in search of alternative non-imperialist, counter-hegemonic cultural values, involved in studies using post-colonial or minority perspectives. The confrontations surrounding the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle on 30 November 1999 were the first eloquent demonstration of insurgent cosmopolitanism (Fisher and Ponniah, 2003; Sen et al., 2004). The World Social Forum is today its most accomplished manifestation. The use of the term 'cosmopolitanism' to describe the global resistance against the unequal exchanges produced by hegemonic globalization may seem inadequate in the face of its modernist or Western ascendancy. The idea of cosmopolitanism, like universalism, world citizenship and the rejection of political and territorial borders, has indeed a long tradition in Western culture, from the cosmic law of Pythagoras and the *philalalia* of Democritus to the '*Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum*

puto of Terence, from the medieval *res publica christiana* to the Renaissance humanists, and from Voltaire, for whom 'to be a good patriot, it is necessary to become an enemy of the rest of the world', to working-class internationalism. This ideological tradition has often been put to the service of European expansionism, colonialism and imperialism, the same historical processes that today generate globalized localisms and localized globalisms. Insurgent cosmopolitanism, on the contrary, refers to the aspiration by oppressed groups to organize their resistance on the same scale and through the same type of coalitions used by the oppressors to victimize them, that is, the global scale and local/global coalitions. Insurgent cosmopolitanism is also different from that invoked by Marx as meaning the universality of those who, under capitalism, have nothing to lose but their chains – the working class. In addition to the working class described by Marx, the oppressed classes in the world today cannot be encompassed by the class-which-has-only-its-chains-to-lose category. Insurgent cosmopolitanism includes vast populations in the world that are not sufficiently useful or skilled enough to 'have chains', that is, to be directly exploited by capital. It aims at uniting social groups on a non-class basis, the victims of exploitation as well as the victims of social exclusion, of sexual, ethnic, racist and religious discrimination. For this reason, contrary to the Marxist concept, insurgent cosmopolitanism does not imply uniformity, a general theory of social emancipation and the collapse of differences, autonomies and local identities. Giving equal weight to the principle of equality and to the principle of recognition of difference, insurgent cosmopolitanism is no more than a global emergence resulting from the fusion of local, progressive struggles with the aim of maximizing their emancipatory potential *in loco* (however defined) through translocal/local linkages.

This character is both the strength and the weakness of insurgent cosmopolitanism. The progressive or counter-hegemonic character of the cosmopolitan coalitions cannot be taken for granted. On the contrary, it is intrinsically unstable and problematic. It demands constant self-reflection by those who share its objectives. Cosmopolitan initiatives conceived of and created by a counter-hegemonic character can later come to assume hegemonic characteristics, even running the risk of becoming converted into globalized localisms. It is enough to think of the local initiatives in participatory democracy, which had to fight for years against authoritarian populism, the 'absolutism' of representative democracy and the mistrust of the conservative political elites, and which nowadays are beginning to be recognized and even adopted by the World Bank, seduced by the efficiency and lack of corruption they have applied to managing funds and development loans. Self-reflexive vigilance is essential in order to distinguish between the technocratic concept of participatory democracy sanctioned by the World Bank and the democratic and progressive concept of participatory democracy, as an embryo of counter-hegemonic globalization (Bello, 2002).

The instability of the progressive or counter-hegemonic character is also derived from another factor: the different concepts of emancipatory resistance held by cosmopolitan initiatives in different regions of the world system. For example, the struggle for minimum standards in working conditions (the so-called labor standards) – a struggle led by trade unions and human rights organizations in the more developed countries, to prevent from circulating freely in the world market products produced by labor that does not reach these required minimum standards – is certainly seen by the organizations that promote it as counter-hegemonic and emancipatory, since it aims to improve the conditions of the workers' lives. However, it can be seen by similar organizations in peripheral countries as one more hegemonic strategy of the North, to create one more form of protectionism which favors the rich countries and harms the poor ones. In spite of all these difficulties, insurgent cosmopolitanism has succeeded in credibly demonstrating that there is an alternative to hegemonic, neoliberal, top-down globalization, and that is counter-hegemonic solidarity, bottom-up globalization. From now on, what we call global and globalization cannot but be conceived of as the provisory, partial and reversible result of a permanent struggle between two modes of production of globalization, indeed, between two globalizations.

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Global Assemblages

Stephen J. Collier

Keywords anthropology, global assemblages, rationalization, techno-science

Max Weber began his 1920 'Prefatory Remarks' to the *Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion* with a famous and provocative claim:

The child of modern European civilization will inevitably and justifiably approach problems of universal history from the following standpoint: What chain of circumstances led to the appearance in the West, and only in the West, of cultural phenomena which – or so at least we like to think – came to have *universal* significance and validity. (2002: xxviii)

A series of illustrations follows: developments in history, music, science, architecture, bureaucracy, and, finally, 'the most fateful force in our modern life', capitalism.

Contemporary sensibilities balk. Few today would agree that the development in the West of an orchestra with a string quartet as its nucleus, or

the East's lack of a solution to the problem of the dome, give either civilization a claim to phenomena with universal validity, even if one could find a serious scholar still willing to talk about 'the West' and 'the East' (or, for that matter, about 'civilization'). But the most crucial items on Weber's list – science, bureaucracy, and economic rationalism, to which Weber's work returned again and again – are harder to dismiss. Whatever misdirections resulted from discussions around globalization in recent decades, it is certain that at the beginning of the 21st century the ever-more pervasive spread of capitalism and the rationalization of what Weber called the 'life worlds' are central topics for a global knowledge. Indeed, the most relevant question today is not whether the significance of such forms is universal but whether they can be meaningfully associated with 'the West'. Twentieth-century developments in Japanese and Chinese capitalism, or in Russian, Indian, and Pakistani techno-science – to take a few among innumerable examples – should convince us that, whatever claims one might make about their patrimony, these forms no longer require the support of their conditions of origin.